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govern dress—the principles of the beautiful in their application even to hats and coats, to bonnets and dresses.

Letters

ON LANDSCAPE PAINTING.

LETTER III.

If a truly fine picture could be produced with the same certainty as an ordinary steam-engine, specific directions might be given with a uniform result; and it would appear that thousands of landscapes *are* produced on precisely similar grounds, with even fewer claims to attributes of Fine Art. Although there are certain principles which constantly guide the hand of the true artist, which can be defined, classified, and clearly understood, and, therefore, communicable—yet the whole history of Art from the beginning, does not present a single instance where a thorough and scientific knowledge of these principles has of itself been able to produce a truly great artist, for the simple reason that such knowledge never can create the feeling, which overrules all principles, and gives the impress of true greatness.

I caution you, therefore, against reliance on any theoretical or technical directions which I or any one else may give in the course of your studies, further than as means which you are to employ subject to your own feeling. It has not been my intention in these letters to show you *how* to paint so much as *what* to paint: to point out the distant object, and erect an occasional guide-board on what seems to me the best path leading to it. The means and modes of travel are already to be had at every road-side, and better than I can furnish. All that I might say on the various colors and mediums, tools, or what not, necessary for your purpose, including dissertations on design, composition, effect, color and execution, would only be a repetition of what has been already written and published throughout the land, and which you can readily procure of the color-man and the bookseller. After all, whatever valuable instructions *they* furnish, their practical value must depend on your experience. All that I would advise is this—let materials be few and simple at first; as you advance, you will add what your feeling calls for. Much useful information may be obtained on all the subjects above mentioned, and you may be enlightened in the elements of *picturesqueness*, and other externals, with which alone too many artists, critics and connoisseurs, are contented; but those who can appreciate the higher attributes which make a picture a noble work of Art, will tell you that all the above-named requisites may be very imperfectly employed, and yet the picture may be truly fine, and even great; they will tell you that the difference consists in that which distinguishes the versifier from the poet, and this is all it is essential to know.

That is a fine picture which at once takes possession of you—draws you into it—you traverse it—breathe its atmosphere—feel its sunshine, and you repose in its shade without thinking of its design or execution, effect or color. These are after considerations: there is poetry in such a landscape, however humble. It will be great in pro-

portion as it declares the glory of God, by a representation of his works, and not of the works of man.

I appeal with due respect from the judgment of those who have yielded their noblest energies to the fascinations of the *picturesque*, giving preference to scenes in which man supplants his Creator, whether in the gorgeous city of domes and palaces, or in the mouldering ruins that testify of his "ever fading glory," beautiful indeed, and not without their moral, but do they not belong more to the service of the tourist and historian than to that of the *true* landscape artist?

Without further multiplying words, you will perceive the purport of these observations. There can be no dissent from the maxim, that a knowledge of integral parts is essential for the construction of a whole—that the alphabet must be understood before learning to spell, and the meaning of words before being able to read—not to admit this would be absurd; yet many a young artist goes to work in the face of an equal absurdity—filling a canvas just as an idle boy might fill a sheet of paper with unmeaning scrawls, occasionally hitting the form of a letter, and, perhaps, even a word, so that the whole mass, at a little distance, may have the semblance of writing; and so, after he has wasted sufficient materials to have served, by well-directed study, to effect the attainment of the knowledge he lacks, he feels this deficiency, and goes back, or more correctly speaking, takes the first step forward, and begins with his letters. You have learned these letters, and how to spell, in the practice of drawing, and you have found out the meaning of many words, but there are yet many more, with phrases and whole sentences to learn (and this, I myself, feel, in more than one sense, while writing to you), before you can write and entirely express your thoughts.

Proceed then, choosing the more simple foreground objects—a fragment of rock, or trunk of a tree; choose them when distinctly marked by strong light and shade, and thereby more readily comprehended; do not first attempt foliage or banks of mingled earth and grass; they are more difficult of imitation, which, as far as practicable, should be your purpose. Paint and repaint until you are *sure* the work *represents* the model—not that it merely resembles it. This purpose, that is, the study of foreground objects, is worthy whole years of labor; the process will improve your judgment, and develop your skill—and perception, thought, and ingenuity will be in constant exercise. Thus you will not merely have observed in the rock, the lines, angles, and texture, and in the tree trunk, the scoring or plainness of surface, which respectively characterizes them, but you will have acquired knowledge and skill applicable alike to every portion of the picture. In producing such an imitation, you will have learned to represent shape with solidity, projection, depression, and relief, nearness and distance, the coöperation of color with form, light and shade, and above all, you will have developed and strengthened your perception of the natural causes of all these results.

In the tree trunk, for example, and also in the rock—though less simple, and not as

suitable for the present illustration—you see the application of perspective, and a demonstration of the law which governs the expression of space. When the light strikes on the trunk of an oak, on the side directly at right angles with your vision, the scoring lines nearest the eye and towards the shadowed sides, are strongest and sharpest, graduating in distinctness from the centre outward, and each division of bark diminishes proportionately. Light and color conform to these changes, being most pure or positive in the nearest portions. The lesson on the shape or roundness of this object is not the only one; you have the principle of that gradation in light and dark, and color, which begins at the foreground, and extends to the horizon. Thus every *truthful* study of near and simple objects will qualify you for the more difficult and complex; it is only thus you can learn to read the great book of Nature, to comprehend it, and eventually transcribe from its pages, and attach to the transcript your own commentaries.

There is the letter and the spirit in the true Scripture of Art, the former being tributary to the latter, but never overruling it. All the technicalities above named are but the language and the rhetoric which expresses and enforces the doctrine—not to be unworthily employed to embellish falsehood, or ascribe meaning to vacuity. As I have not proposed to teach you processes, neither have I aimed at methodical arrangement or direction, further than so much as appears indispensable to a right beginning, I desire you to pursue the road pointed out with all consistent freedom from restraint, adding only such restrictive and experimental advice as shall incidentally appear to me advantageous to you.

If you should have a predilection for color, you will be most likely, in your early stage of practice, to give it undue importance, to an extent that may impede your progress—that is, sacrifice higher qualities to its fascination. I know no better safeguard to this liability, than to remind you that a fine engraving gives us all the greatest essentials of a fine picture, and often a higher suggestiveness than the original it represents, and so often, a mere outline, because the imagination fills in the rest, according to our own ideas of truth in its completeness. But, for the present I would especially direct attention to the light and dark, which make up the effect of the engraving, being far more complete than the outline; in short, it lacks nothing but color, which, though mighty in its power, is nothing more than the eloquence of Nature employed for the fullest enforcement of her Truth—the great ideas are antecedent. Waste not your time, therefore, on *broad sketches* in color; such only can be useful to the mature artist, as suggestive rather than representative. You had better look at all objects more with reference to light and dark than color, but do not infer from this that I would depreciate the value of color, for it is of inestimable value. It is, however, a sort of humorous sprite or good demon—often whimsical and difficult of control—at times exceedingly mischievous, spoiling many a good picture as if with mere malicious intent—but when experience shall have acquainted you with its tricks and its virtues, you will understand better the worth of its service. Study, then,

the light and dark of objects in connection with color, keeping in mind, as far as practicable, the distinction I have indicated; and as I have recommended first the practice of outline with the pencil, so I would also enjoin the study of light and shade with pencil, sepia, or even charcoal—any material you can best manage for this end. I would not debar you, in the meantime, the luxury of painting, but let your time be divided between the two. Nor will this course be lacking in interest and pleasure.

The same may be said in relation to confinement to foreground studies, for a period, as above advised; for in the advanced state of practice in which I find myself, and at an age when early attractions might be supposed to lose some portion of their freshness, I feel no abatement in the interest of these pursuits, and no amount of toil and fatigue can overbalance the benefits, either in consideration of utility or enjoyment.

Yours, truly,

A. B. DURAND.

SUMMER TIME.

Out into the sunlight! The day is flooding the sky, and unmoved by a breath of wind the white cirri stream, in long lines across the grey-blue, vapory and tremulous with the light that permeates everything on earth and in the heavens. There is a joyousness not to be told in words, animating everything. The greens are as vivid as vigorous life and unbroken sunlight can make them, and the bird-songs as clear and sweet as they could have been in Eden. If ever the spirit of peace and rest came to earth, it must have been on a June day.

And what is so rare as a day in June?

Then, if ever, come perfect days—

Then heaven tries the earth if it be in tune,

And over it softly her warm ear lays.

Whether we look, or whether we listen,

We hear life murmur or see it glisten,

Every clod feels a stir of might,

An instinct within it that reaches and towers,

And grasping blindly above for light,

Climbs to a soul in grass and flowers.

This is what one feels, and I especially, lying on the glowing turf, with the massive dark shadow of an old elm lying around me, watching alternately, "the dreaming clouds," the distant grazing cattle, whose drowsy bell-tinkles, come to me as from a dream, and the insect life which swarms through the grass blades, and climbs the clover stems, or buries itself in the blossoms of the May-flower.

I feel happy without knowing why. The sense of the harmonies of inanimate nature lulls me into a glorious quiet, and if there is bitterness or grief in life, I do not know it more. There is a blue haze, as delicate as the bloom on a young girl's cheek, on the distant hills; and the green wheat-fields on their sides alternate with dark masses of forest, and together they come down over the hill-side, and mingle with the old orchards' formal tree rows, and the richer green of the fertile valley meadows, just at the junction of which is an unpretending, unpainted little farmhouse, not a quarter as large as any one of the group of barns around, which break with their dusky red the prevalent green. Then, wide winding through the "flats," the river breaks in, with here and there a gleam of blue between the willows, and it wanders on down the valley, to where the

hills shut closer together and the bolder hill-side plunges down to the water, and valley, hill and river pass away into the mystery of the haze, from which I would like to emerge and float in an oarless boat down the stream again, among the islands, and under the groups of over-hanging elms, sycamores, and lindens, which mark its meanderings. Oh, so still and smooth flows that "drowsy water with tree dreams in it," turning and bending, and turning back again, and each time coming nearer the foot of the hill, on whose tops I lie! Then, along by the river-side, just below, a carriage road comes down to the shore, and a ferry-boat slowly plies to and fro by the rope stretched from bank to bank.

In the cornfield beyond are a few busy specks, which we know to be men, and a tiny team travels at an ant's pace on the brown and mellow ground, scarcely tinged with green by the springing corn.

Slowly the sun rises to the noon height, the faint blast of a horn is heard from the farm-house; the laboring specks gather together, and move thitherwards; the ferry-boat ceases its traverses, and moored on the pebbly beach, rests, and the cattle gather beneath the trees, and patiently whisk themselves, chewing their cuds, until the heat of noon is passed. Then motion has ceased, and the quiet is unbroken.

Nearer to me the white May-flower dots with its white the field; and the dandelion, yellow glory, with the flecks of the buttercup warm the green, while along the low stone wall the blackberry thicket, white with blossoms, promises an August harvest to the children of the neighborhood. Beyond the fern-clouded sheep pasture, which lies at the other side of the stone wall, is a wood, whose deep green shade tempts me from the grass couch, where I have been trying to think these two hours, and have only succeeded in finding out that I could do something pleasanter—feel, and I plunge into the pleasant gloom. The broken, crooked paths lead by old tree trunks, at whose roots mossy banks tempt me to rest again, and picking wastefully the late anemones, and, luxuriating in a harvest of the darling wild lilac, whose fragrant white flower, and glossy, deep green leaves, lie modestly hid among the more common and less prized forest herbs, I watch the sunlight which comes down through the open tree tops, and sleeps among the dry leaves and springing flowers, until some chance fitful breath of the west wind rustles over-head, when it starts from its dream, and, wandering up the tree-trunks a little way, flutters back again to its bed of moss and leaves.

There is a busy hum of insects, ceaseless, all-pervading, yet scarcely perceptible, an undertone of nature's music, which, when you listen to it, fills your ears and mind, but passes away when you hearken for it no longer. A squirrel barks his vexation at my intrusion, and in his trouble wearies himself, then, bounding up the butternut trunk, is gone again.

Blessed June! Is there a world where your quiet and sunlight reign for ever, and the frosts which whiten the aching head fall no longer?

"Oh, whither, whither, glory-winged dreams
From out life's sweat and turmoil would you bear me?"

M. M.

LEUTZE'S WASHINGTON.

To the Editors of the Crayon.

I HAVE read with much interest your remarks on Leutze's picture of "Washington at the Battle of Monmouth," and desire, with your leave, to offer an humble protest to those passages which condemn the artist for attempting to elevate this act of Washington's life, to the dignity of a subject for historical composition. You observe, that he errs against good taste, as well as artistic and historic propriety, in selecting from the history of our great patriot, one of the very few occasions upon which he is known to have lost the command of his temper; such being, moreover, of itself, an unfit subject for a historical painting, which should be the embodiment of grand and noble emotions, of heroic exploits, and, as far as possible, should uphold and depict the dignity, and not the weaknesses, of human nature. This is, doubtless, the true aim of the historical painter, and if he labors faithfully and conscientiously with such an end in view, he is entitled to some meed of praise, provided his design is developed with sufficient clearness; although we may differ from him as to his method of expressing his idea.

A great and good man, giving way to a momentary fit of passion of the most violent nature, if the fact be taken alone, connected with other circumstances, presents certainly a mortifying exhibition of human weakness, as undignified as it is degrading. But if it has a meaning (1), or a moral significance beyond the mere incident depicted on the canvas, one easy of appreciation, and following, as a natural consequence, I submit that a character is at once stamped upon the scene, which entitles it to be considered a fit subject for the historical painter.

In the case before us, Washington is depicted as laboring under strong emotions of anger; the flush upon his cheek, the scornful curl of his lip, his aroused and excited attitude, undignified, perhaps, but true to nature (2), denote that passion has, for the moment, gained the complete mastery of him. Indeed, so complete a transformation has the artist effected in the calm features and stately figure, familiar to us from Stuart's portraits, that many have been inclined to doubt the faithfulness of the likeness. It is no welcome or easy task to attempt such a transformation in such a man, and I think the artist has not been altogether successful; but I do not purpose to criticise the execution of the work—I wish to show that it is susceptible of a meaning. If it were manifestly devoid of any design; if the artist had depicted this unworthy scene in the life of Washington in the mere wantonness of genius, to exhibit his versatility or his knowledge of dramatic effect, I should not hesitate to condemn him in the severest terms; for the noble Art which he follows admits not to be trifled with or abused. But I hold that he had a certain design in view, when he undertook this hazardous experiment, and will give you my interpretation of it.

Washington is known to have possessed a naturally quick and irascible temper, but, by an extraordinary exercise of the will, to have almost invariably restrained any out-